

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 4804

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PGOV, PFOR, PINS, PINT, ES, HO, PN
SUBJECT: PRESIDENT MOLINA ON VARIOUS TOPICS

1. ON OCTOBER 14, ACCOMPANIED BY MESSRS. HOLBURN AND SIMMS OF AIGS, I PRESENTED PRESIDENT MOLINA WITH A NASA SATELLITE MOSAIC MAP OF EL SALVADOR, IN A PUBLIC CEREMONY AT THE CASA PRESIDENCIAL. AFTER THE FORMAL PRESENTATION, THE PRESIDENT INVITED US TO REMAIN FOR A PRIVATE DISCUSSION DURING WHICH HE CONVEYED THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION.

2. THE UPCOMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN - PRESIDENT MOLINA STATED EXPLICITLY AND EMPHATICALLY THAT NAPOLEON DURATE, EXILED LEADER OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY AND 1972 OPPOSITION PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE, WOULD NOT BE ALLOWED TO RETURN FROM EXILE TO RUN AGAIN. I ASKED THE PRESIDENT IF THE 1962 CONSTITUTION DID NOT GUARANTEE ALL SALVADORAN CITIZENS THE RIGHT TO ENTER AND RESIDE IN THE NATIONAL TERRITORY. PRESIDENT MOLIAN CONFIRMED THAT THIS WAS
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INDEED THE CASE, BUT AS HE PUT IT " IN THIS CASE WE

ARE DEALING WITH SOMETHING MORE IMPORTANT THAN THE CONSTITUTION, THE MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC ORDER." THE GOVERNMENT HAS DECIDED, THE PRESIDENT EXPLAINED, THAT DURATE'S PRESENCE AND ACTIVITIES WOULD DEFINITELY REPRESENT A RISK TO LAW AND ORDER. I ASKED THE PRESIDENT IF THE STORIES MAKING THE ROUNDS ARE TRUE THAT THE OPPOSITION COLAITION (UNO), AWARE THAT DURATE WILL NOT BE PERMITTED TO RETURN, IS TRYING TO FIND A RETIRED MILITARY OFFICER TO HEAD THE TICKET. HE SAID THAT HE HAS BEEN TOLD THAT RETIRED COLONEL MARINAO CASTRO MORAN'S NAME IS BEING MENTIONED AS A POSSIBLE UNO PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. HE SAID THAT CASTRO MORAN, RETIRED FROM ACTIVE DUTY SOME TWELVE YEARS AGO, REPRESENTES NO THREAT AS A "MILITARY CANDIDATE" SINCE HE HAS NO BASE OF SUPPORT WITHIN THE PRESENT OFFICER CORPS.

3. RELATIONS WITH HONDURAS - THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT THE GOES HAS DECIDED TO HOLD UP RATIFICATION BY THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE RECENTLY SIGNED MEDIATION PROTOCOL "UNTIL WE SEE IF THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION BECOMES STRIDENT ON THE ISSUE OF POSSIBLE CEDING TO HONDURAS OF SALVADORAN TERRITORY AND TRIES TO USE IT IN THE UPCOMING ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN." I ASKED HIM IF THE HONDURANS WERE AWARE OF THIS, AS THIS COULD GIVE THE IMPRESSION TO THE WORLD THAT EL SALVADOR WAS RECALCITRANT, AND HONDURAS EAGER, TO RESOLVE THE BILATERAL DISPUTE. WHILE AGREEING THAT THIS MIGHT HAPPEN, THE PRESIDENT REAFFIRMED THE IMPORTANCE HE PLACED ON DELAYING RATIFICATION FOR DOMESTIC POLITICAL REASONS. HE ADDED THAT THIS HAD BEEN CONVEYED BY FON MIN BORGONOVO TO HIS HONDURAN COLLEAGUE AT THE TIME THEY SIGNED THE PROTOCOL IN WASHINGTON* THE PRESIDENT SAID HE HAD ALSO INFORMED GENERAL SOMOZA DURING A RECENT MEETING, AND THAT SOMOZA HAD CONVEYED THE DECISION TO PRESIDENT MELGAR. HE ADDED THAT HE PLANNED TO CALL MELGAR THAT EVENING. THE PRESIDENT THEN SAID THAT HE BELIEVES THAT OVER-ALL RESOLUTION OF THE DISPUTE WITH HONDURAS IS "IMPOSSIBLE", PRINCIPALLY BECAUSE HIS HONDURAN COUNTERPART DOES NOT HAVE REAL DECISION-MAKING POWER OR THE ABILITY TO FOLLOW THROUGH ON COMMITMENTS. PRESIDENT MOLINA
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BELIEVES THAT MELGAR COULD NOT OBTAIN THE ESSENTIAL SUPPORT OF SUCH AN UNWIEDLY BODY AS THE 24-MAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENT. COMMENT - I HAD THE DISTINCT IMPRESSION FROM EVERYTHING THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT THE GOES PLANS TO DELAY ASSEMBLY RATIFICATION OF THE MEDIATOR PROTOCOL UNTIL AFTER THE PRESIDENTIAL SUCCESSION PROCESS IS COMPLETED, I.E., AT A MINIMUM NOT BEFORE THE FEBRUARY 20 ELECTION. END COMMENT.

4. THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT HE DISCUSSED HONDURAS' INTERNAL PROBLEMS IN HIS RECENT TALKS WITH FELLOW CHIEFS-OF-STATE SOMOZA, LAUGERUD, AND ODUBER. HE CHARACTERIZED HIS COLLEAGUES AS WORRIED ABOUT HONDURAN INSTABILITY, PARTICULARLY IN VIEW OF WHAT THEY PERCEIVE AS INCREASED EVIDENCE OF CUBAN COMMUNIST INFLUENCE IN THAT NEIGHBORING COUNTRY.

5. U.S.-PANAMA NEGOTIATIONS ON THE CANAL - THE PRESIDENT, IN AN ALMOST APOLOGETIC MANNER, SAID HE HOPED THE USG UNDERSTOOD THEY HE AND HIS GOVERNMENT HAD TO PUBLICLY SUPPORT PANAMA IN ITS CANAL DEMANDS. HE EXPLAINED THAT A PUBLIC POSTURE OF SOLIDARITY WITH A SISTER LATIN REPUBLIC WAS UNAVOIDABLE. HE EMPHASIZED THAT HE FULLY UNDERSTOOD THE DIFFICULTIES THESE NEGOTIATIONS GIVE THE USG DURING THE PRESENT U.S. POLITICAL CAMPAIGN, AND THAT PROGRESS WAS NOT POSSIBLE UNTIL THE U.S. ELECTION CAMPAIGN WAS OVER. THE PRESIDENT SAID HE HAD DISCUSSED THESE IDEAS WITH TORRIJOS DURING A BRIEF VISIT TO PANAMA ON OCTOBER 13. THE PRESIDENT SAID THAT HIS PANAMANIAN COLLEAGUE UNDERSTOOD AND ESSENTIALLY AGREED. MOLINA STATED THAT HE FELT THAT MANY OF TORRIJOS' RECENT STATEMENTS RE THE CANAL WERE A RESULT OF HIS OWN DOMESTIC POLITICAL PROBLEMS.

6. ISTA - THE PRESIDENT ADMITTED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WAS NOW PLANNING "ADJUSTMENTS" IN THE ISTA LEGISLATION. HE INSISTED HOWEVER THAT THIS DID NOT MEAN THEY WERE GOING BACK TO SQUARE ONE AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL IMPLEMENT AN AGRARIAN REFORM PROGRAM.

7. COMMENT: THE PRESIDENT WAS OBVIOUSLY RELAXED AND MOST FRANK IN EXPRESSING HIS OPINIONS AND DECISIONS.
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JUST AS OBVIOUSLY HE WANTED TO REAFFIRM HIS AND HIS REGIME'S FRIENDSHIP FOR THE USG, AND CONSEQUENT WILLINGNESS TO BE COMPLETELY OPEN WITH US. HE ENDED BY SAYING HE HOPED WE COULD GET TOGETHER AGAIN SOON.

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